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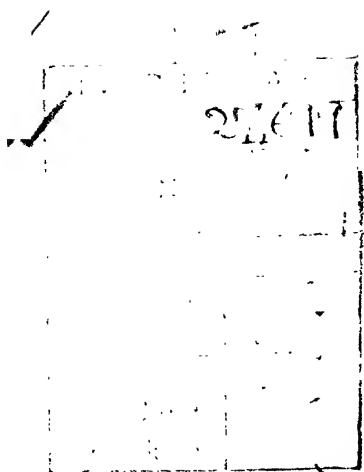
TWENTY-FOUR PORTRAITS

by William Rothenstein

With critical appreciations by various hands

SECOND SERIES

LONDON
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TO
FRANCIS DARWIN FRANCIS CORNFORD
AND FRANCES CORNFORD
IN HAPPY ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF LONG AND
UNCLOUDED FRIENDSHIP

PREFACE

A first series of twenty-four drawings appeared two years ago, containing studies of men whose fame has stood the test of a generation of critical challenge. The present collection consists of further portraits of contemporaries, some of whose works and personalities have yet to undergo the long trial from which I hope their reputations will emerge with their first radiance undimmed or enhanced. There were juniors among the first twenty-four as there are seniors in the present volume, but the reader will readily understand the general tendency of the two series.

I hope that some of the drawings in this new volume may be found to contain something of life within them. For my sitters have been unsparing with their time, and I offer them my warm thanks for lending themselves to a tedious business

I have once again to acknowledge the brilliant literary portraits facing the drawings which I owe to the generosity of my friends Arnold Bennett, Gordon Bottomley, W.H. Davies, E.J. Dent, John Drinkwater, G. P. Gooch, Phillip Guedalla, Lord Haldane, Aldous Huxley, James Laver, Stephen Mackenna, the devoted translator of Plotinus, Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, Thomas Sturge Moore, John Middleton Murry, Robert Nichols, Lennox Robinson, my brother Albert Rutherston, Randolph Schwabe, Geoffrey Scott, Evelyn Strachey, W.J. Turner, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Sir Lawrence Weaver.

• December 1922

W. R.

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LAURENCE BINYON

LAURENCE BINYON

The French have a malicious saying "Genius is the talent of a man who is dead". Unfortunately for the world, but how fortunately for his friends, Binyon is still alive and like to live. How difficult it must be for them then to write of him, especially in a few words! When we were young he was full of admiration for many kinds of men. For him, the masters were not proprietors of fame and prices to be dispossessed: but were the objects of his most profound regard. If Mr. Santayana is right and "one must remember in order to be remembered, admire if one would be admired" his fame is secure. Nor did he stint his contemporaries; no one was more generous. Perhaps we oftenest recall him holding up one hand to beseech for silence, his mouth pursed as small as a smiling mouth can be, to keep back the merry anecdote that must not be freed in words, till he has obtained the attention of his friend or friends. He was ever ready with instances of the droll or quaint oddities of men of fine gift. The humanness of demi-gods delighted him as much as their divinity, though you felt that when alone he pondered this latter.

His *Flight of the Dragon* may be the best possible introduction to the art of the Far East; since knowledge is not merely *knowledge* for him but a preparation for communion. Therefore he does not frustrate his readers by dwelling on the futilities and formalities of eastern thought and sentiment, which are like the forbidding teeth in the Dragon's mouth, but leads us round till a point of vantage is reached for climbing to a seat between the wings. That it has soared and may soar again, there, becomes a conviction.

His poetry is for quiet hours to brood over, not to discuss in a café, or to quote in a drawing room. Take down *London Visions*, *Odes*, or *The Death of Adam* and retire on a sunny day to a beech wood and you will have a chance of beginning to know him.

His *Belfry of Bruges* is most likely the finest trumpet poem of our times, the most worthy to rank with those of Milton and Wordsworth: just as his "*The Statues*" is certainly the finest meditation on that shadow which accompanies the human spirit on every heroic adventure, through every burst of splendour and pomp—that suffering form at the gate which suddenly arrests the bemused eyes of the reveller as more lovely, more significant than that of any guest. Why need his stately ecstasies and sedate enthusiasms await the consecration of death to be more widely known?



GORDON BOTTOMLEY

GORDON BOTTOMLEY

In writing of literary men, the creators of original work, we have to study two kinds of career. First, we have the common type—the young man of promise who makes a good start and, after a year or two of newspaper talk, fails as a creator and becomes a reviewer of other people's work. The second type, rare indeed, is the man who begins with a few admirers and then quietly, but surely, grows until he has established himself. It speaks well for the literary discernment of the late Edward Thomas that two or three poets who now have established names owe so much to his early encouragement. Mr. Gordon Bottomley was one of them. But in spite of Thomas' efforts, it was not until years later, when "King Lear's Wife" appeared in a modern anthology, that Mr. Bottomley's name became known to a larger public.

Mr. Bottomley, like Mr. Abercrombie, is at a much greater disadvantage than his contemporaries in keeping his name in the public eye. This is owing to the great number of anthologies which, making a steady use of our shorter poems, have no space for the long dramatic poems of the two poets I have mentioned. For these poetical dramas the poet has only one chance of reaching the larger public, and that is through the theatre. But although a hundred critics may suggest that a poetical play is actable, it is not certain that one theatrical manager will bear the suggestion in mind.

What distinguishes Mr. Bottomley's work from most of his contemporaries is its strength. This strength is to be found in his short poems as well as his dramas. We can never apply the terms "pretty" or "charming" to "The Ploughman" or "New Year's Eve", the two short poems that find their way into anthologies. What a jingle some of his contemporaries—even some that are far better known to the public—would have made by the repetition of "Cartmell Bells!"

Mr. Bottomley does not suffer from overproduction, and pays the world the compliment of giving the best that is in him.



LORD ROBERT CECIL

LORD ROBERT CECIL

An Englishman looking down from the gallery at the first meeting of the Assembly of the League of Nations whispered to a neighbour, as Lord Robert Cecil took his place at the rostrum, "Peter, the Hermit". Certainly Lord Robert has all the appearance of the preachers of a crusade. His tall gaunt, almost ungainly figure, his pale ascetic looking face, his tremendous earnestness, his entire devotion to the cause to which he has set his hand justify to some extent comparison with the Monk of the Middle Ages. But the impressions of the man in the gallery are rarely complete and the conception of Lord Robert Cecil, as of one preaching ideals which, in themselves admirable, are difficult to apply to every-day life, and as moving in a plane above and beyond every-day political life is very far from the truth.

Lord Robert's purpose is far less to preach than to translate into practical politics the ideals and conceptions of others in which he most firmly and earnestly believes. He came into the Foreign Office in 1915 and there inherited many of the ideas and much of the policy of his friend Lord Grey. As Minister of Blockade he had the handling of one of the most abstruse, difficult and practical problems of the war. Aiming always to further the cause of the Allies, and refusing to sacrifice the ultimate good for the sake of temporary expediency, he was more than most even responsible for making the entry of the United States into the war on our side possible. After the Armistice he became one of the drafter of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and helped to crystallize ideas which had long been floating in men's minds, while it is an open secret that the clauses, in that document, which have proved to be least practical in application, were opposed by him at the time. Since then he has devoted his life to the development and to the application of the principles of the League of Nations as the one practical means of saving civilisation. A soldier, in a high position in the War Office, who during the war was brought into close touch with the Foreign Office said:—"Of all the Ministers with whom I have had to deal, I have found Lord Robert Cecil the one who most quickly gives the soundest judgment in a difficult problem. I found too that he always put principle before expediency and the highest public interest first of all." No bad epitaph for a public man.



1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025

G. K. CHESTERTON

G. K. CHESTERTON

Somebody once said of Mr. Chesterton that part of his greatness derived from the fact that he made virtue amusing. It is true; it was even more conspicuously true when he first appeared. He stepped into a world full of brilliant cynics, brilliant immoralists, and brilliant *flâneurs*, and he turned their own guns upon them. He not only refused to let the Devil have all the best times but he took away his audience with a livelier one than any. He found the heretics as funny as they found the conventions; he made better jokes about them than they had ever made about anything. Solemn people, and people who merely differ from him, often affect to dismiss him as a paradox-monger and an irresponsible clown. As a matter of fact no man of his time has exhibited his principles more clearly or applied them more consistently. He is like most moral propagandists in that he does not parade his doctrines without intermission; and he certainly has never continued to write two pages together without making a jest. Yet his views about this life and the other are implicit in many of his most extravagant passages, his comic poems and even his detective stories; and if he enjoys all sorts of things besides argument, when was it decided that life was only given to us in order that we might form correct opinions about it?

It is arguable that Mr. Chesterton's preoccupation with theology, morals and politics has handicapped him as an artist. It is certain, I think, that the habit of journalism and the very opulence of his spontaneity have so handicapped him. He can do so much easily that he will scarcely stop to take the last pains with a sentence or a stanza; he is so eager to persuade that he cannot attach great importance to craftsmanship; he is, moreover, modest about his gifts as an artist. Nevertheless he has written the finest comic verse of our day and *The Ballad of the White Horse*, one book out of forty, would have given a professed poet a substantial reputation. And if his poetry (for he might have been a great poet) has been damaged by his practice of journalism, his journalism has certainly been enriched by his gifts as a poet. In his most casual articles he has apt to fling about splendid imagery and swift music.

The most important thing about him is his profound knowledge of human nature. He knows what men are like, and still presents an affection for them.



W. Rothstein 1922

GORDON CRAIG

EDWARD GORDON CRAIG

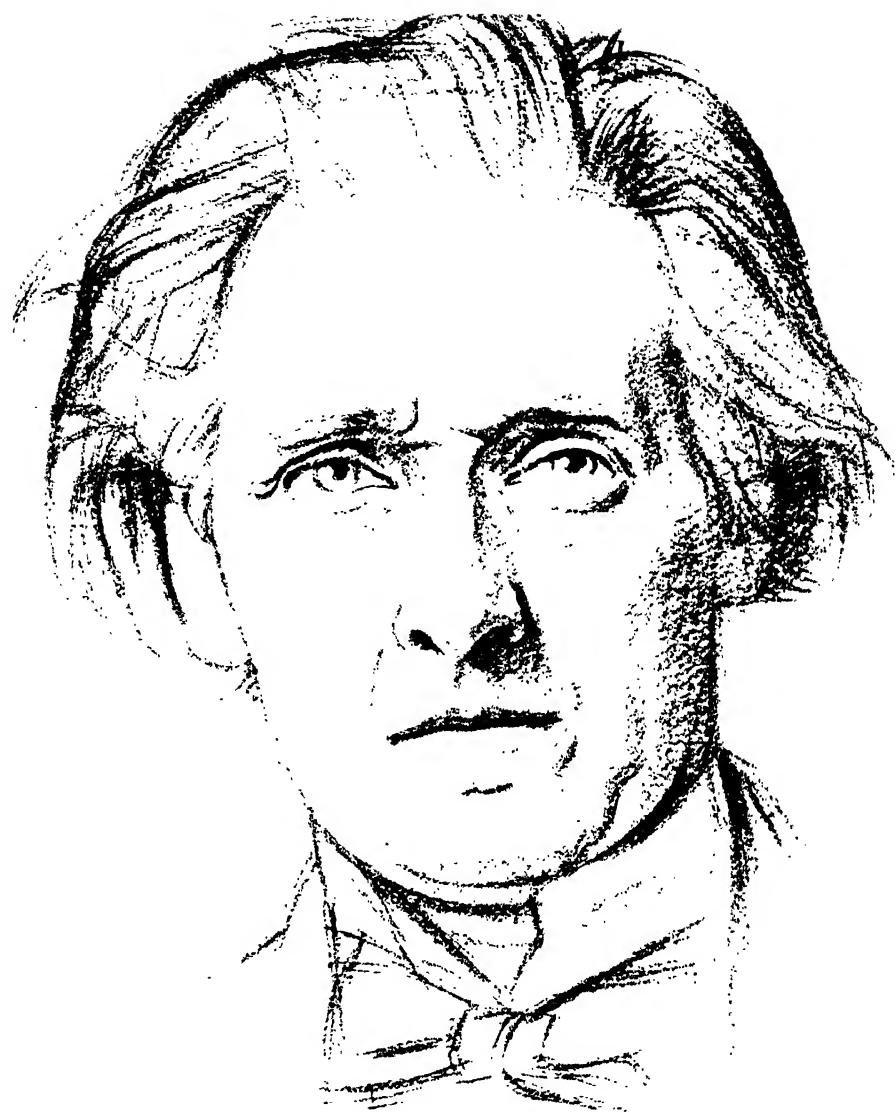
Mr. Edward Gordon Craig prefers for himself the designation of *Actor*. Born of the theatre, the distinguished son of a distinguished mother—for it is impossible to think of Craig without remembering Miss Ellen Terry, impossible to think of Miss Terry without remembering Craig—he for long lived its life in every possible capacity.

To the generation of to-day Craig stands out pre-eminently as artist and prophet. The actor has been forgotten. Craig the artist has influenced the European and American theatre as no one else has done: alone the English theatre has found it possible to resist the ideas of the prophet.

To many of us this is a tragedy, incomprehensibly stupid: some small share of blame, however, must fall on Craig's own shoulders; standing for the highest and most noble possibilities in his art, his vision has proved impatient of the minor difficulties inevitably astride his path. Of such he has been magnificently unyielding with no gesture of compromise.

But when we remember the plays and masques he has produced, *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Vikings*, *The Masque of Love*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Acis and Galatea*, *Bethlehem*, our admiration is tempered by a deep sense of regret that Craig has proved so intractable. As a writer and editor Craig expresses himself with a brilliant and vivacious clarity. Besides editing, single handed, many reviews, *The Page*, *The Mask*, *The Marionette*, his "Art of the Theatre" is likely to be a classic of the stage.

Craig's many beautiful drawings, his designs engraved on wood and on copper whereby he expresses his ideas in concrete shape, prove him a remarkable and sensitive artist. The spirit of this side of his work is what we value, perhaps, the most. To inspire others by prophecy is a great gift, but to inspire by reason of the created work, living, aglow for perfection, is the most precious thing of all.



W. H. DAVIES

W. H. DAVIES

We have many verse-writers, but few authentic poets. W. H. Davies is one of them. Like all authentic poets he is unique; but whereas most true poets are in some sort expressive of the age in which they live, Davies is not. It is even doubtful whether he lives in his age at all. What he sees face to face is so obviously different from what we see, that we sometimes wonder whether the world he lives in may not be lacking one of the dimensions with which we are familiar.

And, in so far as doubt may be called a dimension of the modern mind, this is true. Davies is innocent of hesitations. He takes hold of men and things from such an angle that the directness and firmness of his grasp bewilders us. We feel like Columbus' companions when they watched him stand the egg on end: admiring and perhaps a trifle resentful, above all if we happen to be—as most of his greatest admirers are—occupied ourselves in trying to balance the egg. It is only the envy felt by those who cannot break the rules into which they were born for one for whom the rules simply do not exist.

Yes, Davies lives in another world than ours. Some of our common-places are his terrors; and he has a thousand freedoms from which we are everlasting exiles. Some of his poems are fresher, more evidently newly-minted, than any that have been written since the Carolines: some of his prose is the finest simple prose since Bunyan. The only defence we have against this devastating excellence is to say, what is true, but scarcely worth saying, that he could not express some of our most characteristic thoughts and experiences. He does not know anything about them. Perhaps, if he did, he would not think them worth while expressing.

Still, by this thought we are reminded that Davies has still to write the book—let it be in prose, with a few poems scattered here and there—which would be the most fascinating of all. Let him tell us what he thinks of this age, of his contemporaries, in a word, of us. What fearsome fauna, or ridiculous manikins, are we in his sight? Are we just pale ghosts to him, twittering in the ruins of a world? Or are there no ruins, and is the world as fresh as a May meadow to his eyes? Or would he—this would be most wonderful and most like the Davies of whom we have experience—discover in us, though the mist of our uneasy discontents, some sparkling newness to prove to us that, miracle of miracles, we still are young?



H. A. L. FISHER

H. A. L. FISHER

It is not often that a really philisophic thinker becomes a Cabinet Minister. It is even less often that he finds himself at the head of just the department where the special training of his mind enables him to fashion with most ease the principles requisite for effective reform. Yet both of these things happened in the case of Mr. Fisher, and it is fortunate for the nation that it should have been so. Probably the majority of the public do not realise what a rare thing the adaptation of a statesman to his office is. They esteem Mr. Fisher as an attractive political personage, and as excellent in the kind of gifts to which their daily reading of the newspapers has led them to attach attention. Only comparatively few know how much more was required for success in the conception and passing into law of the Education Act of 1918. A Minister who is to carry through Parliament so difficult a subject must be able to inspire faith. This Mr. Fisher was able to do. For Parliament and the public alike felt that here was a man come to a task in which he believed, and for which, it might be altogether unconsciously, he had been making himself ready throughout the period of his University life.

Mr. Fisher has the gift of being able to write as well as to speak, and a certain quality in the style of his writing has increased the area where he finds supporters. His outlook in his books is a large and a liberal one, so large and so liberal that it made the reader feel that the author, with his Parliamentary gifts and practical capacity, would do well in any public station in which he might be placed. But it is to be hoped that Mr. Fisher will not be diverted from his effort to lead the nation in education. The subject is one of steadily increasing importance for the future of this country, and Mr. Fisher would be hard to replace. Other men may do work for the League of Nations, and it will probably be best in the long run, both for his countrymen and for himself, that he should devote his public life to the accomplishment of a great educational end.

There was criticism of Mr. Fisher for having allowed his energies to be diverted into other channels. It was also said that he was not sufficiently resolute in opposing the suggestion that our educational system could be cut down without really sacrificing national capital. But the task of a Minister in his position was a more difficult one than the public is apt to realise, and we may be thankful that he succeeded in accomplishing as much as he did.

He stands out as a remarkable figure in the history of educational progress in this country.



W. Rothman, Inc.
1920

RALPH HODGSON

RALPH HODGSON

Mr. Ralph Hodgson is one of those poets who likes to keep himself to himself. He is also a little too apt, for some of us, to keep his poetry to himself. When a man at fifty or so has published not much more than a hundred pages of poetry, most of which is among the very best of his age, he must be prepared to bear with friendship if it complains a little that these are short commons. But that is all the complaining that can be done about Mr. Hodgson's poetry. In reading a poet that we like very much we are always apt to say to ourselves that he is the best of his kind, or of a generation, or of a group. The comparison as it affects other poets means nothing, but it does mean that while we are reading him we find him entirely satisfying, and Mr. Hodgson's best work—that is to say practically all his work after his first book—is this always. *The Song of Honour*, *The Bull*, *The Bride* and a dozen of the small lyrics are things that do not stale on the twentieth reading, that, indeed, gather strength from year to year, as they must surely do through all the years to come. He gives his own beautiful and personal touch to the great tradition in which he works, and the content of his poetry comes from a mind as loyal and single as any in our poetry. The ghosts of the old world are no ghosts for him, but the living pledges of his own vision, purging his own time and environment of everything trivial and captious, and informing it with the very spirit of religion.



GUSTAV HOLST

GUSTAV HOLST

Many artists have potential great thoughts but lack the means of expression; many others have great precision of expression but very little to express.

To the first class belong the great majority of English composers of recent times, the thought is noble and sincere but the expression is fumbling and uncertain: they lack the sure touch and the accent of authority. Just as a long period of slavery makes a nation unable to make full use of the fruits of freedom when they come, so the English composers from long habits of subservience to the foreign oppressor are apt to be timid and stammering when they attempt the task of self expression.

If on the other hand we look abroad we find that most of the composers have much less to say and that of much less fine quality than their English contemporaries, but they possess that authority of utterance, that sureness of touch which enables them to give the full expressional value to the thoughts that are in them.

However, we find today in England one composer at all events who combines depth of thought and far-reaching imagination with the sure touch in the matter of utterance. In listening to the 'Planets' or the 'Hymn of Jesus' of Gustav Holst we feel at once that here is a composer who has something worth saying and knows exactly the best way to say it. There is never a note too much or too little, every stroke tells, not as the result of a mere dazzling technique or from the choice of an easy and smooth path, but as the real expression of a musical thought crystallized into sound, without hesitation and without compromise.

Holst has not achieved this without a struggle. His artistic progress has not been a series of easy victories but rather a slow advance with varying fortunes towards a goal which was never lost sight of: a small moderate success was always sacrificed to ultimate triumph. His new Opera "The Perfect Fool" seems for the moment to have completed the circle, for in this we see all the freshness and exuberant humour of his extreme youth strengthened and perfected by the experience and judgment, by the broader emotional and intellectual outlook of full maturity.



ALDOUS HUXLEY

ALDOUS HUXLEY

Mr. Aldous Huxley is only twenty-eight years old. This is his most conspicuous quality. The statement has more meaning than may at first appear for although Mr. Huxley is already the 'author of three volumes of verse, one novel and two volumes of short stories, his temperament is nevertheless that of a connoisseur and scholar.

Educated at Eton and at Balliol, when he took a First Class in the School of English Language and Literature, he is known to highbrow young men as an expert on modern French poetry, to dealers in 'Antiques' as a judge of furniture, and to his friends as an enthusiastic admirer of Bernini and of Baroque and Rococo architecture. His taste in books is for Memoirs and Letters—preferably of the eighteenth century—but he is an omnivorous reader, a beetle crawling across his hearth makes him turn to BEETLE in the Encyclopaedia when a more ordinary character would hit it with a hammer.

He has a prodigious memory which he stores with out of the way information and with malicious stories about prominent public characters but, unlike most literary men, he has a genuine interest in science in its more practical bearings such as birth-control and irrigation. When one compares Mr. Huxley with the average brilliant product of our public schools and universities one is struck immediately by his lack of humbug. Most of these young men who turn to literature for a career are condemned by the sterility of their nature to assume a pose. Confronting these we have writers of a more vulgar temperament who mistake their energy for inspiration. It is Mr. Huxley's merit that he cannot be placed in either category. So far his work has been tentative. In spite of its many admirable qualities it remains somewhat of a disappointment to his friends. Strange as it may seem to superficial readers there is in Mr. Huxley a strain of intellectual conventionality which one can only compare with a physical timidity. In his own words:

"What could he find

Beyond the dim and stifling now and here

Beneath the unsettled turmoil of his mind?

Oh there were nameless depths: he shrank from fear."

Disgust which, after all, is only a kind of fear is his next strongest emotion:

"I sometimes wish

That I were a fabulous thing in a fool's mind

Or, at the ocean bottom, in a world that is deaf and blind

Very remote and happy, a great, goggling fish."

But these words were written more than four years ago and Mr. Huxley to-day is, I repeat, only twenty-eight.



AUGUSTUS JOHN

AUGUSTUS JOHN

Few living men convey such an impression of strength and unforced dignity as Augustus John. Much that might justly be said of his presence is crystallized in a speech of Hamlet's; we recognize "the front of Jove himself" and the rest of the attributes of Denmark's majesty—as well as the occasional awful taciturnity of the Ghost. He will not suffer by an allusion to Mrs. Malaprop's irresistible perversion of the speech. Unlike some other figures who appear in public with gestures nicely calculated to preserve the ordered folds of their togas of dignity, his candid imperfections are for all men's eyes; and an impertinence is less likely to disturb his toleration for the follies of others than a demonstration of fulsome reverence for himself. Yet even in our irreverent generation, when conventional biography is invaded by a zeal for truth (with a perceptible bias towards ridicule), no man is better fitted to become an heroic figure, not only to the outer world but to his valet. It may be suspected that his closest intimates remain a little in awe of him. Among British painters he has had the richest natural endowment, combined of passion, intellect and power. He is humorous, generous, adventurous; well read, and full of curious knowledge; direct and forcible in speech, deep-voiced, with a shrivelling contempt for pretence; amused at an oddity, but impatient of the pertinacious snob. His prodigal diffusion of energy would be impossible without perfect physique. His output of work is enormous, produced like a natural force, with a special instinctive quality, a feeling for life itself, which is beyond the reach of any imitator. Many traditions meet in him, but he belongs to no school, and will leave no considerable one, though his influence on his contemporaries has been manifest. He is a law to himself, but not a harsh disciplinary. Those who know him best and are best qualified to judge are convinced that with greater restraint we might expect still greater things from him. As it is, in a retrospect of some twenty years of his work there is much of a quality that seems certain to stand the ultimate test of time and familiarity.



SIR EDWIN LUTYENS

SIR EDWIN LUTYENS

Reasons have to be found for the place that Sir Edwin Lutyens fills in the eyes both of laymen and of his brother architects. To the multitude he is the creator of the Cenotaph, to lay students of house and garden design he is the inventor of scores of gracious habitations, to architects at large he is a Master who has fused tradition and invention into a body of achievement, that is alike an amazement and a valid inspiration to hundreds. Despite his great adventure at Delhi he is most English of architects, and both by training and disposition owes nothing to the current influences of the *Beaux Arts*.

His technique has been evolved under the hand of a man who would spell Renaissance with an initial W, but he uses it with a humour and a boundless fertility of his own. It fills its place in his work in the spirit of Dr. Bridges' aphorism "All technique in Art consists in expert devices for the mastering of obstinate material." So much he learnt from Philip Webb, the great-hearted student and friend of Morris, who gave again to English builders a sense of values in brick and wood, in lead and plaster. From Norman Shaw he took the suavity and largeness of design that shines through Shaw's many indiscretions with materials. On these two great men, and with his own restless and absorbing eye—for no one owes less to his sketchbook—he has built up a technique both of design and of the use of materials which is a synthesis of all that is best in the current re-creation of an English tradition.

In the career of every successful artist there is to be sought some quality which has helped or hindered him to make the most of his art. Wren was modest and wide in knowledge and outlook beyond all English experience, the nearest we can boast to a Leonardo. Robert Adam wielded a suave autocracy which quelled the haughtiness even of the eighteenth-century nobility. Chambers used the machine of the Court and the Royal Academy with unique skill. Barry exerted a massive industry with so patient a determination that opposition was broken.

Sir Edwin Lutyens handles his world with an elfish fun that makes him seem never to have grown up. But perhaps beneath it lies a wisdom that finds in humour a penetrating weapon.



COMPTON MACKENZIE

COMPTON MACKENZIE

In his beginnings he walked delicately between a sense of form and a fastidious vocabulary. Undergraduates read his verses between paper covers, and exquisite young gentlemen caught in *The Passionate Elopement* a flattering echo of their own affectation. The bright beam of his observation shifted a century nearer to his own times, and *Carnival* seemed to promise a new school of the picaresque, in which pretty girls in hansom-cabs trundled across a background of real beauty. But quite suddenly he surprised his contemporaries at thirty with the promise (or was it the threat?) of a new *Comédie Humaine*. His imagination was engaged in a vast tangle of fictitious biographies in *Sinister Street* and its immediate neighbourhood. The little ladies of the new picaresque were induced to take service in a larger army, and he set out to draw the *état civil* of the West End of London, the older universities, a few streets in Chelsea, and a country parsonage or so. A wise old gentleman, who had once written for Edward Compton a supremely unsuccessful play called *The American*, was filled with mild alarm by his "waste and irresponsibility — *selection* isn't in him". But in the loose-limbed chronicle he had found (or escaped from) his method, and he plies it to the general enjoyment on the various islands of his affection. For, like Sir James Barrie, he is an *amateur* of islands. But happily in the case of Mr. Mackenzie they are excluded from his work, which clings firmly to the mainland and almost to the metropolis, where there is traffic and the light of street lamps and altars and music halls.



WALTER DE LA MARE

WALTER DE LA MARE

If Charles Lamb had had another sister and Coleridge had married her, their eldest grandchild might well have been Mr. Walter de la Mare or someone else of the same name. His genius cannot be described or accounted for easily except by such a pedigree, though even then it would be helpful to be assured that he might be also a nephew of Lewis Carroll. The melody, the nostalgia for a never-quite-seen land of enchantment and wonder, the sudden mysterious colours burning through shifting mists, of the romantic poets ally themselves in him without warning to the different, the mental music by which the Elizabethans outpassed the resources of sound and colour — *The Song of The Mad Prince*

“Who said ‘Green dusk for dreams,
Moss for a pillow’?
Who said ‘All Time’s delight,
Hath she for narrow bed;”

must be the most perfect lyric of our century; it might have been an added song of the mad Ophelia had not its terms been such as only Hamlet could have thought of for Ophelia—yet at the height of such achievement its real author can turn the romantic poets’ equipment to the service of a quite other Wonderland in songs that have been taken immediately to the exacting hearts of Alice’s inheritors, or (foregoing half his resources of rhythm and measure, apprehension and suggestion) to a shrewd and humorous outlook on daily life and a prose which would vie with Lamb and Dickens if it were not too engaged in transmuting perceptions as whimsical and poignant as theirs into the entranced vision which is wholly his own; so that Miss M’s most troubled and disquieting experiences become a journey not dissimilar from Henry Brocken’s among many intimations of immortality and eternity.

The Renascence of Wonder is always going on in Mr. de la Mare: he is of the rare clan of Coleridge and Beddoes and Poe and the Morris who wrote *The Blue Closet*, and his fortune might have been a singing-time as brief and ensorcelled and supreme as theirs had he not strayed from the true path to his own advantage and ours and turned aside into a daily world to renew his poetic youth by grace and merriment and revitalising observation.



JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY

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Mr. Middleton Murry's work is often discussed but seldom with agreement. Perhaps this may be because each participant in this, as in other literary arguments, is frequently not talking about the same subject as his opponent. Indeed, there are several Mr. Murrys to be talked about. There is the novelist, the poet, the critic and, distinct from the last, the reviewer. Hence it often happens that while one disputant is basing his thesis on the novels, the other will refute him from the poems or from critical work; and as they are too often unfamiliar with each other's Mr. Murry, little emerges from the discussion. But perhaps this arises as much from a certain sharp distinctness of method which he uses in each literary form, as from the ignorance of the public. There is something detached and "conscious" about his mind which allows it to seem very different when seen through different mediums. Thus even an acquaintance with one book of each of the kinds he has written will prohibit those comfortable generalisations which are the critic's reward for a careful ignorance of his subject.

Mr. Murry's more recent novel was called "The Things We Are" and about it the only agreement that has been arrived at is that whatever else it is, it is not a novel. Many readers found its characters so emphatically the things that they were not that they judged it too strange to be called fiction, while some found those characters so mysteriously, so quintessentially, not like themselves, but simply themselves, that they could only wonder how Mr. Murry, whom they had never met, had acquired these decidedly biographical, not to say autobiographical, details about them.

But to the majority Mr. Murry is undoubtedly above all a critic and reviewer, the analyst of style, the expositor of the Russians. If his gifts, perhaps most obviously brilliant in this sphere, must be hinted at in one sentence, one might guess that his special achievement is to have combined all that subtlety and delicacy of analysis which modern psychology has put at the critic's disposal with, and here lies his uniqueness, that strength and "authority" which their as yet unchallenged standard of values, gave to the older critics. But it would be the greatest mistake in the world to regard Mr. Murry's spirit as wholly critical. One cannot tell what he will write next. The theatre is as yet unattempted. Might he become an English Tchekhov? But probably this is a contradiction in terms.



ROBERT NICHOLS

ROBERT NICHOLS

Robert Nichols was brought up in an atmosphere of ancient houses and connoisseurship; he imbibed taste and the historic sense as simply as babies imbibe milk. His first great experience was the war. After that he went into literary journalism and wrote reviews and short stories. Every sentence in them was charged and overcharged with the inner significances which for him render mysterious and disturbing all the phenomena of life. At the same time he composed poetry, which is no doubt his true business on earth. The title of his principal book of verse, "Ardours and Endurances", aptly if unintentionally describes the stuff of his mental, moral, and spiritual existence. Ardently enthusiastic, and capable of very joyous ecstasy, he yet discovers in the passage from one day to the next more matter for brooding and melancholy than for bright celebrations. If he is quickened, he is also afflicted, by experience. His grand preoccupation is the same as the grand preoccupation of H.G. Wells: the human conscience. With an infinity of travail he wrote an immense psychological drama, and called it "Guilty Souls", in which men fight not so much with fate as with their consciences. This play, too long, too diffuse, and technically far too ingenuous, has an unquestionable sombre power which puts it among the handful of distinguished plays produced during the present century. It has never been performed. Immediately after finishing it, perhaps even before it was quite finished, the playwright accepted an exotic and seductive invitation to profess English literature in the University of Tokyo. He is not a unique scholar. The pundits, mandarins, and makers of dust-sandwiches in our literary world would probably attack the exactitude of his scholarship; but exactitude of scholarship is only a minor quality of the teacher, and Robert Nichols has the major qualities,—original taste, catholic breadth, a sound perspective, and the burning desire to impart his own sensations to others. Nichols attained fame early. He is young. He has still to find himself. That he will find himself in Japan is improbable. When he finds himself in England, the event will rouse considerable pother in a phlegmatic island.



LENNOX ROBINSON

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When Synge, the great genius of the Irish Theatre, lay 'dying Lennox Robinson's first play was being produced in Dublin. This is not to suggest that he is Synge's spiritual successor but just to place him chronologically in the Irish literary renaissance. With Synge closed the era of dramatists who interpreted the Irish peasant in terms of poetry, with Lennox Robinson came the realistic Irish drama, the drama of hard pitiless fact. It is a drama of disillusionment, and though his work has grown softer as he has grown older, though the crudeness of his early plays has developed into something deeper, sweeter, more forgiving, yet it has never lost its chief characteristic. His plays have no villains in them, his heroes defeat themselves. This may seem a hard saying to a public which knows him best as the author of a comedy which amused London for a year, but only by throwing a veil of character and farce over *The Whiteheaded Boy* could it be saved from being recognised as a grim study in self-illusion.

Yet perhaps it is not as a playwright or as a man with a gift of delicate prose-writing that he will be remembered but as a man who was himself lucky in chance and choice and who desired for others an equal freedom of choice and an equal chance and who therefore put half his energy into an attempt to bring the knowledge and beauty of the world to every village in Ireland. He may be remembered as a man who desired passionately that his country should become international and not parochial.

Perhaps, in fact, disillusionment is his own particular illusion and he is a greater optimist than he appears to be.



W.R. 1911

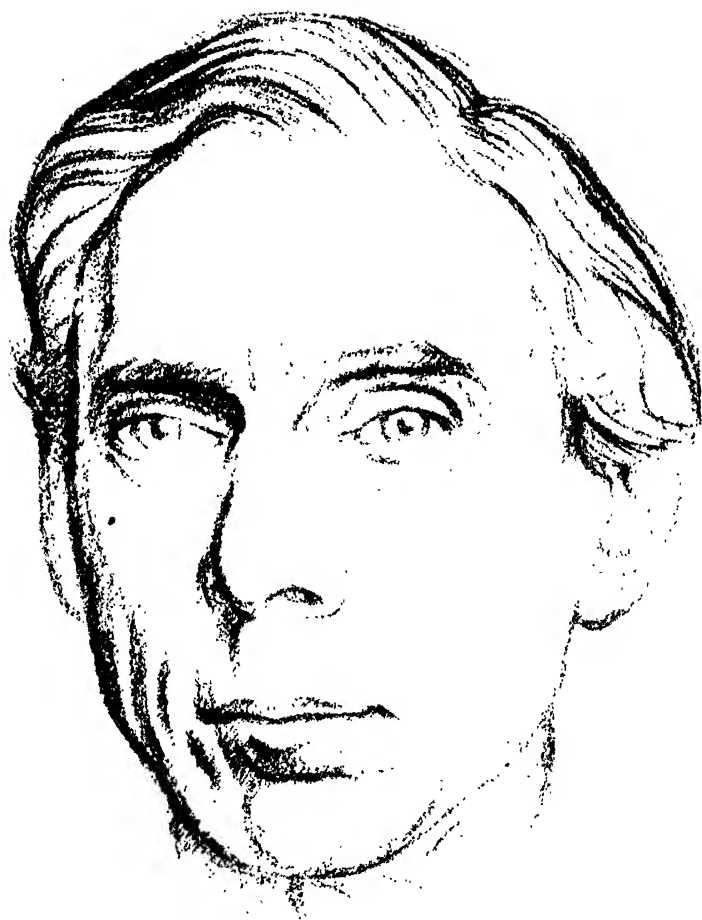
BERTRAND RUSSELL

BERTRAND RUSSELL

The name of Bertrand Russell conjures up visions of "a mind for ever voyaging through strange seas of thought alone". He is the founder of the New Realism, he has dethroned the Idealism which dominated the schools in his youth, and he is the boldest of living British thinkers. It is easy to disagree with him; but we can no more neglect him than we can forget Bergson, or Kant, or Hume.

In quieter times he would have spent the whole of his days in the quest for ultimate realities. But his lot is cast in an age when the world is rocking to its foundations, and, like lesser men, he often opens the door of his study and steps down into the crowded market-place. The grandson of Lord John Russell would naturally be on the side of reform; but there is nothing of the cautious Whig in his composition. He never thought much of Western civilisation, though he is one of its ornaments, and the Great War has made him think less. Rejecting the simple creed that it was a struggle between good and evil, he sharply arraigns the combatants in both camps. He turns with relief to China, a land of happiness and laughter, where war is properly despised as a degrading relic of barbarism.

He remains a lonely figure—for most of us crave a warmer air than that which he breathes on the iced mountain peaks. Yet he has the courage to bear the loneliness which comes to men who reject tradition and authority as the guide of life and pursue their thought to its logical issue. His religion is liberty. He could not find it at Moscow, and therefore he has no use for Bolshevism. His lectures on the "Principles of Social Reconstruction" reveal more of the man than any of his other writings. Our society, he teaches, is dominated by the principle of possession, and it must be reconstructed on the impulses of creation. Our goal must be self-realisation, not standardisation. There is no one in our midst whose opinion is better worth weighing when we form or test the principles which govern our lives.



ALBERT RUTHERSTON

ALBERT RUTHERSTON

No one ever wore a precocious laurel with happier modesty. His friendship is wide and generous, his work delicately aloof. He speaks through no megaphone; takes no part in the propaganda of cliques. Rather, like a mediaeval monk, absorbed in illuminating his page of vellum, the last trump might fail to distract him. He knows that the dead in art rise often, but seldom come to life.

He has a wiry, Cranach-like gift for silhouette, a sense of poetry that at moments suggests the "Songs of Innocence", a search for detail like an Eastern miniaturist, a Venetian love of costume. But whatever he has learnt from the past is welded and congruous with his own talent. To contemporary catch-words he is finely indifferent, making his own things in his own way.

For some years he took exercise as a realistic painter; then discovered his decorative calling, and refined his fantasy on silk: rock and plant forms full of faithful mystery; nervous nonchalant figures; the whole a perfect pattern. Small things; but large qualities. And of these in due course he gave new proof on that widest canvas—the Stage. As an illustrator his intuition is flexible to irony. He can mimic Housman's Victorians no less than Maeterlinck's Blue Bird.

Whatever medium he employs he is on safe ground; his technique feels and fits it like a glove. On each problem he leaves his happy imprint. A scholar's conscience guides the painter's delight.

The old painters made what they were asked, but in their own idiom. Some later ones, with borrowed voices, sing uncalled-for melodies. Rutherford is one of the makers. And often while I watch a new "Movement" of uneasy painting—movements, sometimes, as breathlessly stationary as that of the Red Queen in *Alice*—and pensively nibble the proffered biscuit which rewards my thirst, I call up, for the refreshment of the mind's eye, that serene little upper room in Lincoln's Inn, so near to the dusty archives of the law; and the true craftsman who sits there, like some rare resourceful spider, spinning in the dim London light his intricate web—a gossamer Bohemian fairyland where harlequins and artists models, enchanted costers and care-free ladies, wander like children against far landscapes and great skies.



SIEGFRIED SASSOON

SIEGFRIED SASOON

His taciturnity is ruminative. And this rumination is sad, humourous and indulgent with an indulgence that forbears from any but half-wistful comment on all forms of human weakness save cruelty and hypocrisy. Toward them he is inflexible. Even brute stupidity receives a sort of weary justice at the hands of this man who is so much a realist of the imagination that at stupidity's grossest atrocities he can still envisage it for what it is—incapable of sinning against the light in that no light has lightened it. Gloomy he is not, sad he is not, but a certain sombreness shrouds his pain, and his gaiety—the most personal possible—has ever about it a sort of tenderness, as if he would without a trace of a pose warn us that it is but an interlude. He has been a poet and seen through what is merely 'poetical', a brave soldier and perceived that soldierly qualities alone are not enough, a Labour man and found Labour not always as sincere as himself. In all these activities, the corruption of the instrument has saddened him. For in Siegfried Sassoon the man of ideas and the man of affections are never—as how should they be?—reconciled. Hence his fascinated delight in the simpler of earth's mortals—those relatively untroubled by Idea—the hard rider to hounds, the 'card', the person who is entirely private. Hence too his distrust of brilliance, of the 'fine phrase', of the magnificent gesture. On general questions he would rather not fight than fight, and this of all his Englishness is the thing most English about him. Tough, even remotely, however a principle and fight he will, stubbornly, sadly and to an end that knows no compromise. His value to the age is the value of a private person who has his own standard of values and who corrects the solitary and Shelleyan Quixote in him by the Samuel Johnson. Thus does he contribute to this age more than he appears, because he rings every contribution he makes upon the counter of his rationality with such a harsh conscientiousness that the future will but be able to pronounce that in a period when much false coin was consciously or unconsciously tendered, every coin of his, no less in life than in art, rang true.



J. C. SQUIRE

J. C. SQUIRE

The caricaturist loses by being unable to get people to appreciate his serious drawings, and Mr. Squire's reputation has suffered, as he is well aware, by having been made in Parody. Unmalicious as parody can be—and there is no malice in 'Tricks of the Trade'—we find it difficult to believe in the sincerity of those to whom we owe an evening's amusement. This is particularly unjust to Mr. Squire, for the suspicion is less deserved by him than by almost any living English poet. His verses, neither 'clamorous' nor 'timorous', have scarcely attained the recognition due to them. There is no attractive heresy paraded, no superficially-charming perversion, to lead the foolish to hail him as the founder of a school; and yet he has, by the consistent quality of his work, come to be regarded as almost the High Priest of the quiet sect of the Georgians. His labours in temperate and scholarly criticism have no doubt contributed to this result, but it is by his verse, and by his serious verse, that he plainly would prefer to be judged. Here is no noisy appeal to violence, no flavour of the Boulevards, no wooing of the *sorcière glauque*, with one eye on the philistine audience. His frame of mind is indicated by his favourite image—that of sitting by an open window at night, the day's work done; not forgetting the narrow streets and grimy chimney-pots that stretch beneath him, but more aware of the stars hanging overhead. Too honest for prophesy, too clear-sighted for dogmatism, and perhaps too consciously silent of the hell that is in every man, he has set himself to the fashioning of unconstrained, yet deliberate beauty. He loves small fields and high hedgerows, and yet has the true native sense of the wonder and mystery of travel. His verse is always simple, and free from tricks and devices, and sometimes of an almost Wordsworthian baldness, it rises too to heights of real power and inspiration. Poetry is the blooming of a flower; the Lily of Malud shaping itself out of darkness, while we can only catch our breath and watch it grow. Nay, we can do more, for there is wise husbandry, and Mr. Squire is a husbandman of loving care. His poems are as natural, and yet as cultivated, as ripe peaches hanging against a sunny English wall.



JAMES STEPHENS

JAMES STEPHENS

The visionary and the artist in James Stephens the world knows long since. Novel, story, hero-tale, poem, the pages sing and shine: caprice and tenderness, subtle generousities underlain by playful brutalities, extraordinary force with a winning innocence: it is a seeing power like that of a savage, a song and dance as of a child, the loving tolerance of a mystic discerning in all things, noble or trifling or ugly, always some trace of some god.

These things are known: one man would like to add to them and to the limner's presentation some inkling of the private Shēamus underneath it all.

There are writers that keep their best wine, and their merely good, for their marriage feasts; they part only for profit. Not so Shēamus; not so. He gives like the sun gladdening the place beneath all day long. It is the richest talk.

A stranger from a strange though not far land came once questing the soul and habit of Ireland and he wrote a book; Dublin a city of magicians of talk; rub the lantern and all the embroidered cloths glōw around you: this innocent had met Shēamus. Shēamus fills a room; he passes for a city; he gives character to a nation; he has the vision and the report of a prophet, spellbinding, aweing, stilling doubts. The very laughingheartedest of men he is also one grim earnestness; whatever he says, he believes and whatever he believes has been grasped with an intuitional fury which leaves it thenceforth the truth.

And the lavishness of him: St. Martin is immortal at cost of half a cloak: Shēamus gives whole cloaks and the purse and fountain pen in the pocket and thanks the beggar for the whine.



W. J. TURNER

W. J. TURNER

Turner as a social phenomenon—the Turner one casually meets at concert halls, with whom one holds converse across the dinner table—this Turner of flesh and blood is none too clearly visible in the poems signed by his name. It would be hard to form any very definite idea of the man from the writings of the poet. But read his play, "The Man who ate the Popomack," and you begin to know him. You hear, in these curious and delightful dialogues, the voice of Turner as he speaks to you across the dinner table, as he utters, slowly, hesitatingly on a note of something like perplexity, his odd, paradoxical comments about life. It is to the living Turner that you are listening here, to the Turner of everyday intercourse, propounding, with that inimitable mixture of blague and seriousness, the most startling propositions about art and ethics, religion, passion, love.

In the poems, however, this genial commentator upon life eludes us. We find ourselves in the presence of a writer who tends, as he goes on, to become progressively more 'inhuman' (we are using the universally accepted connotations, according to which the epithet 'human' is applied to all those characteristics which we share with the brute creation, 'inhuman' to those which are peculiarly the attribute of man), more purely and exclusively imaginative, and ever less and less concerned with the immediacies of outside fact, of emotion and passion. He takes, for example, the love story of Paris and Helen and writes a poem about it, from which the whole 'human interest' has been eliminated. In his latest volume of poetry, "In Time like Glass", he seems to be moving still further away from the immediate facts of human experience. He seems here to be aiming at the ideal of a poetry which is not held together by the logic of reason or by any definite emotional coherence—a poetry where the values are purely imaginative. Where this voyage away from immediacy will end, it is difficult to say. Meanwhile, it is enough to remark that he is one of the younger writers whose career it is most worth watching.



W.H. 7/2

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

From the death of Purcell down to almost the end of the nineteenth century England was universally regarded as an unmusical country. There was plenty of music performed in England during those two hundred years, but it was for the most part the music of foreigners, Italians and Germans, who found the English sufficiently fond of music to provide them with a handsome livelihood while offering very little competition on the part of native composers. The saddest thing about those two centuries is that English people gradually came to accept the situation meekly and themselves to believe that they were destitute of musical imagination. The man who at last set English music on its feet again was Hubert Parry. Mozart was born into a world that held the musician to be a little superior to a lackey; Beethoven, son of the Revolution, knew himself to be, as a musician, a leader of mankind. England, in music as in politics, is not a revolutionary country. Victorian England regarded the musician as the lackey either of Society or of the Church. It is on Vaughan Williams that Parry's mantle, as a composer, has fallen. He is the natural leader of that large group of younger musicians whose temperaments have been moulded in the traditions of Oxford and Cambridge. They have derived from them not the dry academicism of the old-fashioned Doctor of Music—who seldom spent a day longer in those universities than was necessary for the taking of his degree—but the wide outlook on life and letters, the vocation to leadership and the idealism which knows that Music is greater than the musician.

What gives Vaughan Williams a place apart from and above his contemporaries in English music is not merely his gift of actual musical creation. Nor is it the obvious fact that he has drawn his inspiration largely from those long buried songs of the English peasantry which he and his friends have patiently recovered from oblivion. True, that use of traditional material has contributed much towards inducing English people to feel that there is a music of England, as well as a poetry and a landscape, which they can cherish as their own peculiar possession. Vaughan Williams has given us something more than this. There are others who have more technical accomplishment, perhaps even a more copious musical invention. But there is no one at present living who can approach his loftiness of conception, his vision of

“the traffic of Jacob's ladder

Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross.”



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